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INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-00	INL-00	DOTE-00	PDI-00	EB-00	FAAE-00
	UTED-00	VCI-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	VCIE-00
	DCP-00	PA-00	GIWI-00	DOHS-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	BBG-00	R-00	ECA-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/001W

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3234

OSD WASHDC PRIORITY

WHITEHOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS VIENNA 001213

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: April 27, 2006

EU Health Minister Council Pushes European Diabetes Database

1. Austrian Press agency APA reports on the informal meeting of EU health ministers in Vienna. US Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt and China's Minister for Health Gao Quiang also attended the conference, which focused on fighting diabetes and specific health problems of women. Austrian Minister for Health Maria Rauch-Kallat at the beginning of the meeting recalled the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant 20 years ago, stressing that such a disaster "must never happen again." Secretary Leavitt agreed: "When it comes to public health, we have to think about the unthinkable; because it happens." Independent provincial daily "Salzburger Nachrichten" and ORF TV's prime time news "ZiBI" on Wednesday also reported on the conference.

EU Criticizes Bulgarian Judiciary

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2. According to a report in semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung," EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn has harshly criticized membership candidate Bulgaria, stressing the country's "serious backlog" on measures to fight organized crime. Furthermore, there are some "obscure aspects" with regard to the independence of Bulgaria's judiciary, the Commissioner argues. Austria ratified the EU membership treaties for Bulgaria and Romania yesterday.

----- EU Quarrel over Turkey Settled -----

3. Following months of dispute, the EU member states have reached agreement on conditions for Turkey and Croatia's EU membership. Semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" quotes an Austrian EU Presidency spokesperson as announcing Wednesday that both countries will be sent an invitation from the EU member states today to present their positions on the "education and culture" sectors. The taking into account of "political criteria," as called for by several EU countries, however, has been dropped from this text, as the EU ambassadors will discuss this aspect separately, the daily says.

----- EU Committee Presents Report on CIA Flights -----

4. A special EU committee says the CIA has run more than 1000 flights within the European Union since 2001, often transporting terrorist suspects for questioning overseas, ORF radio, liberal daily "Der Standard" and semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" say. The European Parliament began a probe after claims the US flew suspects to secret prisons in countries that regularly use torture. The US admits some terror suspects were flown overseas for interrogation, but denies sending them there for torture. Report author Claudio Fava says many EU states had ignored the hundreds of CIA flights that had used their airports, according to ORF radio. Fava singled out Sweden, Italy and Bosnia (not an EU member) for particular criticism. The report also lists a flight from Frankfurt, Germany to Azerbaijan in January 2003 as having passed through Austrian airspace, the "Standard" adds.

----- Gudenus Sentenced -----

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5. A court in Vienna has given a former Freedom Party (FPÖ) member of the Austrian Upper House, the Bundesrat, John Gudenus a one-year suspended sentence, independent provincial daily "Salzburger Nachrichten" reports on its front page. He was convicted in connection with remarks made in two interviews last year, in which he disputed the existence of gas chambers during the Nazi period. Gudenus has announced he will appeal the sentence. ORF radio early morning news "Morgenjournal," which also reports on the issue, says that the Austrian Lower House of Parliament will remember the victims of National Socialism.

With US Lawsuit, Bawag Sale Difficult

6. All Austrian media continue to give prominent coverage to the scandal surrounding Austrian bank Bawag, which took a new turn yesterday when creditors of the bankrupt US broker firm Refco filed a class action suit against the Austrian bank, charging it with assistance to fraud. According to semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung," the creditors claim that Bawag was not just an uninformed recipient of Refco money, and instead knew of Refco head Phillip Bennet's illegal activities. This would make Bawag an accomplice in the case - an allegation the bank has dismissed. Like all media, mass-circulation daily "Kurier" writes in a front-page report that the threat of a US lawsuit has "shocked potential buyers of bank Bawag." The sale of the bank, which was planned to go ahead today, is now "completely unrealistic," the daily says.

President Bush's Vienna Visit

7. Mass-circulation weekly magazine "News" in its April 27 issue reports on the expected visit of US President George Bush to Vienna for the US-EU summit June 21. Although the White House has not yet officially announced the US President's trip (a fact Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik emphasizes in an interview with "News"), preparations for the visit are already under way, the weekly says. "News" also publishes a map of central Vienna (page 23) with key locations and venues of the expected event. The US President will be staying at the Hotel Intercontinental, and will meet with Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel at the Hofburg, according to "News." Furthermore, at the US Embassy at Boltzmanngasse about 100 CIA and secret service

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officials are allegedly already working on the presidential visit. The weekly also details security measures, including US and Austrian security forces and personnel, US-Awacs and radar surveillance and anti aircraft missiles stationed throughout Vienna for the Bush visit. In the run-up to the potential visit Austrian groups and platforms have also already officially registered for anti-Bush demonstrations, such as the "Bush go home" platform with about 15,000 expected protestors, says "News."

Rice and Rumsfeld on Surprise Visit to Baghdad

8. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has praised Iraq's new Prime Minister, saying he is focused on and committed to forming a national unity government. Rice was speaking after she and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld met Premier al-Maliki on an unannounced visit to Baghdad. Semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" quotes the Secretary of State as emphasizing that with these visits the United States wants to show the Iraqi people there is unity regarding the political and military aspects of its mission in Iraq. ORF radio meanwhile quotes Defense Secretary Rumsfeld as stressing the new Iraqi government is an "important thing." Iraq, he added, "is a sovereign country, and they're making impressive progress."

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